



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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flower-stalks are crowned with five pale green flowers, four being arranged in a sort of solid square, and the fifth crowning the top. The root has a faint musk-like smell. This humble plant belongs to the order Aralias, whose headquarters are in Japan. You can hardly imagine why it has got so far away from its native centre, but the same difficulty would apply to the ivy, which is partly covering the same bank and climbing up the adjacent trees, for they are both members of the same order, unlike though they seem, and are also the only two species represented in our British flora. Here, too, the wild strawberry is growing, one of the prettiest-leaved of our English plants; and, close by, is its first cousin, the yellow potentilla. The purple-flowered dead-nettles now strongly flank the basis of the hedge-rows, whilst their near ally, the white dead-nettles, are growing even more rankly lower down. Keeping company with them is the dark blue-flowered ground ivy. The sweet violets, blue and white, betray their hiding-places by their delicious perfumes. The exquisite minute-flowered forget-me-not (*Myosotis collina*) clusters in clumps on the dry banks, where, perhaps, an early specimen of the bright blue germander speedwell may be found.

On the clay soil in woods and nooks the primroses have gathered in their hosts; in the meadows, the earliest cowslips have put in an appearance, in company with the lilac-tinted ladies' smock or "cuckoo flower," and the creeping yellow crowfoot. The shrubs and woods are "dim with the misty green of budding leaves." The tide of spring life is flowing in rapidly. All the earth and air is loud with bird music. The sunny winds, even when easterly, stir one's blood like old wine. Day unto day is uttering the speech of nature; night unto night revealing her knowledge. It is a time to live, to think, to ponder, and to grow reverent in!

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BY VICTOR H. ALLEMANDY.

"PARENTS AND CHILDREN," by C. M. Mason.

MISS MASON'S *Parents and Children* is a sequel to her *Home Education* reviewed in these columns in December last. The book is divided into two portions, the first being devoted to "Theory," and the second to "Essays in Practical Education." Among the thirty-nine essays may be mentioned Parents as Rulers, Parents as Inspirers, The Parent as Schoolmaster, The Culture of Character, Faith and Duty, Discipline, Sensations and Feelings, Whence and Whither, and The Eternal Child. These constitute the first section. In Book II. the following are the main chapters:—The Philosopher at Home, Attention, An Educational Experiment, Consequences, Ability, Parents in Council, and A Hundred Years After.

The chapters dealing with the parent and his three-fold duties as a ruler, inspirer, and schoolmaster are delightful reading. Much is heard, nowadays, on such topics as Hooliganism, punishment in schools, home influence, deterioration in manners, and many others, but if these essays were more widely read and the suggestions therein contained carried out, many of the difficulties alluded to above would gradually disappear. "As for the employment of authority," says the author, "the highest art lies in ruling without seeming to do so. The law is a terror to evil-doers, but for the praise of them that do well; and in the family, as in the State, the best government is that in which peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, are maintained without the intervention of the law. Happy is the household that has few rules, and where 'mother does not like this,' and 'father wishes that,' are all-constraining." The limitations and scope of parental authority are admirably summed up in the following paragraph:—"In the first place, it is to be maintained and exercised solely for the advantage of the children, whether in mind, body, or estate. And here

is room for the nicest discrimination, the delicate intuitions with which parents are blessed. The mother, who makes her growing-up daughter take the out-of-door exercise she needs, is acting within her powers. The father of quiet habits, who discourages society for his young people, is considering his own tastes, and not their needs, and is making unlawful use of his authority." . . . "A single decision made by the parents which the child is, or should be, capable of making for itself, is an encroachment on the rights of a child, and a transgression on the part of the parents."

On the making of character the following quotation is extremely helpful:—"If heredity means so much, if, as would seem at the first glance, the child comes into the world with his character ready-made, what remains for the parents to do but to enable him to work out his own salvation without let or hindrance of their making upon the lines of his individuality? The strong naturalism, shall we call it, of our day, inclines us to take this view of the objects and limitations of education; and without doubt it is a gospel; it is the truth; but it is not the whole truth. The child brings with him into the world, not character, but disposition. He has tendencies which may need only to be strengthened, or, again, to be diverted, or even repressed. His character—the efflorescence of the man wherein the fruit of his life is a-preparing—is original disposition, modified, directed, expanded by education, by circumstances, later, by self-control and self-culture, above all by the supreme agency of the Holy Ghost, even where that agency is little suspected, and as little solicited." Various methods of effecting this great work of character-making are suggested in the succeeding paragraphs of this essay, namely, "Parents as Inspirers."

The following summary given at the conclusion of the above essay is of such vital importance that we need not apologise for quoting it *in extenso* here. "These are some of the things that his parents may settle for the future man, even in his early childhood:—

- "His definite ideas upon particular subjects, as, for example, his relations with other people.
- "His habits, of neatness or disorder, of punctuality, of moderation.

- "His general modes of thought, as affected by altruism or egoism.
- "His consequent modes of feeling and action.
- "His objects of thought—the small affairs of daily life, the natural world, the operations or the productions of the human ways, the ways of God with men.
- "His distinguishing talent—music, eloquence, invention.
- "His disposition or tone of character, as it shows itself in and affects his family, and other close relations in life—reserved or frank, morose or genial, melancholy or cheerful, cowardly or brave."

"The problem of education," says Miss Mason, "is more complex than it seems at first sight, and well for us that it is so. 'Education is a life': you may stunt and starve and kill, or you may cherish and sustain; but the beating of the heart, the movements of the lungs, and the development of the faculties (are there any 'faculties'?) are only indirectly our care. The poverty of our thought on the subject of education is shown by the fact that we have no word which at all implies the sustaining of a *life*." Both the terms "education" and "training" are very inadequate. "Our homely Saxon 'bringing up' is nearer the truth, perhaps, because of its very vagueness; anyway, 'up' implies an *aim*, and 'bringing' an *effort*." In the opinion of the author, Matthew Arnold's definition of education as "an atmosphere, a discipline, a life," "is perhaps the most complete and adequate definition of education we possess."

Trenchant suggestions are given in the essay on "The Culture of Character." One or two quotations must, however, suffice. "Change of occupation is not rest: if a man ply a machine, now with his foot, and now with his hand, the foot or the hand rests, but the man does not. A game of romps (better, so far as mere rest goes, than games with laws and competitions), nonsense talk, a fairy tale, or to lie on his back in the sunshine, should rest the child, and of such as these he should have his fill." The physiological wasting of brain tissue is fully explained to show this need for constant change. Those who are acquainted with the working of the brain "centres" will be able to see the need for frequent change even more clearly. "The training of

the will, the instruction of the conscience, and, so far as it lies with us, the development of the divine life in the child, are carried on simultaneously with the training in the habits of a good life; and these will at last carry the child safely over the season of infirm will, immature conscience, until he is able to take, under direction from above, the conduct of his life, the moulding of his character into his own hands. It is a comfort to believe that there is even a material register of our educational being made in the very substance of a child's brain; and, certainly, here we have a note of warning as to the danger of letting ill ways alone in the hope that all will come right by-and-by."

The chapters on "Bible Lessons" and "Faith and Duty" are full of interest, but space will not permit us to consider them here. In the chapter dealing with "Discipline" we find this statement: "Parents should face the fact that children rather enjoy punishments. In these they find the opportunities, so frequent in story-books, so rare in real life, for showing a fine pluck. The child who is in punishment is very commonly enjoying himself immensely because he is respecting himself intensely. . . . The light smart slap, with which the mother visits the little child when he is naughty, is often both effective and educative. It changes the current of baby's thoughts, and he no longer wishes to pull his sister's hair. But should not the slap be a last resort when no way is left of changing his thoughts?" Two important principles are laid down on this point, namely, "(1) the need for punishment is mostly preventable, and (2) the fear of punishment is hardly ever so strong a motive as the delight of the particular wrong-doing in view." At the conclusion of this valuable essay nine definite practical counsels are offered to parents who wish "to deal seriously with a bad habit."

"Sensations and Feelings" are considered in chapters XVII. and XVIII., and many psychological laws are here simplified for those parents who have not had an opportunity of studying psychology. Miss Mason admits that "the physiology of the senses is too complicated a subject for us to touch upon here, but it is deeply interesting, and perhaps no better introduction exists than Professor Clifford's little book, *Seeing and Thinking*." However, simplification of the subject has been so admirably carried out, that readers will

have no difficulty in comprehending a difficult subject. "We all recognise," says the author, "that the training of the senses is an important part of education. One caution is necessary: from the very first a child's sensations should be treated as matters of objective and not of subjective interest. . . . The purpose of so-called object lessons is to assist a child, by careful examination of a given object, to find out all he can about it through the use of his several senses. . . . Two points call for our attention in this education of the senses: we must assist the child to educate himself on Nature's lines, and we must take care not to supplant and crowd out Nature and her methods with that which we call education."

The ethics of examination are considered under the heading, "Show Cause Why." The great danger of examinations exists in the fact that "people rarely accomplish beyond their own aims. The aim is a pass, not knowledge: 'they cram to pass and not to know; they do pass but they don't know,' says Mr. Ruskin; and most of us know the 'candidate' will admit that there is some truth in the epigram." Unfortunately we are unable to follow Miss Mason in discussing the pros and cons of examinations owing to the limits imposed by space. This exigency also forces us to omit mention of several essays from which we should have liked to have made quotations. The second portion of the book will afford much food for thought and abundant amusement, for many important educational truths and principles have been embodied in the form of short stories, each pointing to some moral which it is the purpose of the author to place before her readers. Taken as a whole, we may say that *Parents and Children* deals with the "philosophy of education," and should lead to more independent thought, the lack of which is a serious factor, as Lord Rosebery recently pointed out. Every parent should read it through to extract the many rich gems it contains.